NUMB. CCLVI.

The SPECTATOR.

Φήμη γάρ τε κακὴ πέλεται· κούφη μὲν ἀεῖραι
Ῥεῖα μάλ', ἀργαλέη δὲ φέρειν ——— Heſ.

Monday, December 24. 1711.

HERE are many Paſſions and Tempers of Mind which naturally diſpoſe us to depreſs and vilify the Merit of one riſing in the Eſteem of Mankind. All thoſe who made their nto the World with the ſame Advantages, once looked on as his Equals, are apt to think of his Merits a Reflection on their own Inde- will therefore take Care to reproach him Scandal of ſome paſt Action, or derogate Worth of the preſent, that they may ſtill n the ſame Level with themſelves. The of Conſideration often ſtirs up the Envy of e once his Superiours, who think it a De- om their Merit to ſee another get Ground and overtake them in the Purſuits of Glo- ill therefore endeavour to ſink his Reputa- they may the better preſerve their own. were once his Equals envy and defame uſe they now ſee him their Superiour; and were once his Superiours, becauſe they look their Equal.

r, a Man whoſe extraordinary Reputation up to the Notice and Obſervation of draws a Multitude of Eyes upon him that ly inſpect every Part of him, conſider him Views, and not be a little pleaſed when taken him in the worſt and moſt diſadvan- : There are many who find a Pleaſure ing the common Reports of Fame, and abroad the Weakneſſes of an exalted Cha- publiſh their ill-natured Diſcoveries with , and applaud themſelves for the Singula- Judgment which has ſearched deeper than d what the reſt of the World have and found a Flaw in what the Generality admires. Others there are who proclaim and Infirmities of a great Man with an faction and Complacency, if they diſco- the like Errours and Infirmities in them- while they are expoſing another's Weak- are tacitly aiming at their own Commen- are not ſubject to the like Infirmities, and tranſported with a ſecret kind of Vanity, ſuperiour in ſome Reſpects to one of d celebrated Reputation. Nay it very , that none are more induſtrious in pub- miſhes of an extraordinary Reputation, lie open to the ſame Cenſures in their ; as either hoping to excuſe their own Authority of ſo high an Example, or nary Applauſe to themſelves for re- n of an exalted Reputation, though in arts of his Character. If all theſe ſe- Detraction fail, yet very often a vain Oſtentation of Wit ſets a Man on attacking an eſtabliſhed Name, and ſacrificing it to the Mirth and Laughter of thoſe about him. A Satyr or a Libel on one of the common Stamp, never meets with that Reception and Approbation among its Readers, as what is aimed at a Perſon whoſe Merit places him upon an Eminence, and gives him a more conſpicuous Figure among Men. Whether it be that we think it ſhews greater Art to expoſe and turn to Ridicule a Man whoſe Character ſeems ſo improper a Subject for it, or that we are pleaſed by ſome implicit kind of Revenge to ſee him taken down and humbled in his Reputation, and in ſome Meaſure reduced to our own Rank, who had ſo far raiſed himſelf above us in the Reports and Opinions of Mankind. Thus we ſee how many dark and intricate Motives there are to Detraction and Defamation, and how many malicious Spies are ſearching into the Actions of a great Man, who is not always the beſt prepared for ſo narrow an Inſpection. For we may generally obſerve, that our Admiration of a famous Man leſſens upon our nearer Acquaintance with him; and that we ſeldom hear the Deſcription of a celebrated Perſon, without a Catalogue of ſome notorious Weakneſſes and Infirmities. The Reaſon may be, becauſe any little Slip is more conſpicuous and obſervable in his Conduct than in anothers, as it is not of a Piece with the reſt of his Character, or becauſe it is impoſſible for a Man at the ſame Time to be attentive to the more important Parts of his Life, and to keep a watchful Eye over all the inconſiderable Circumſtances of his Behaviour and Converſation; or becauſe, as we have before obſerved, the ſame Temper of Mind which enclines us to a Deſire of Fame, naturally betrays us into ſuch Slips and Unwarineſſes as are not incident to Men of a contrary Diſpoſition. After all it muſt be confeſs'd, that a noble and triumphant Merit often breaks through and diſſipates theſe little Spots and Sullies in its Reputation; but if by a miſtaken Purſuit after Fame, or through humane Infirmity, any falſe Step be made in the more momentous Concerns of Life, the whole Scheme of ambitious Deſigns is broken and diſappointed. The ſmaller Stains and Blemiſhes may die away and diſappear amidſt the Brightneſs that ſurrounds them, but a Blot of a deeper Nature caſts a Shade on all the other Beauties, and darkens the whole Character. How difficult therefore is it to preſerve a great Name? when he that has acquired it is ſo obnoxious to ſuch little Weakneſſes and Infirmities as are no ſmall Diminution to it when diſcovered, eſpecially when they are ſo induſtriouſly proclaimed, and aggravated by ſuch as were once his Superiours or Equals; by ſuch as would ſet to Show their Judgment or their Wit, and by ſuch as are guilty or innocent of the ſame Slips or Miſconducts in their own Behaviour.

But

But were there none of theſe Diſpoſitions in others to cenſure a famous Man, nor any ſuch Miſcarriages in himſelf, yet would he meet with no ſmall Trouble in keeping up his Reputation in all its Height and Splendour. There muſt be always a noble Train of Actions to preſerve his Fame in Life and Motion. For when it is once at a Stand, it naturally flags and languiſhes. Admiration is a very ſhort-lived Paſſion, that immediately decays upon growing familiar with its Object, unleſs it be ſtill fed with freſh Diſcoveries, and kept alive by a new perpetual Succeſſion of Miracles riſing up to its View. And even the greateſt Actions of a celebrated Name labour under this Diſadvantage, that however ſurprizing and extraordinary they may be, they are no more than what are expected from him; but on the contrary, if they fall any thing below the Opinion that is conceived of him, tho' they might raiſe the Reputation of another, they are a Diminution to his.

One would think there ſhould be ſomething wonderfully pleaſing in the Poſſeſſion of Fame, that, notwithſtanding all theſe mortifying Conſiderations, can engage a Man in ſo deſperate a purſuit; and yet if we conſider the little happineſs that attends a great Character, and the multitude of diſquietudes to which the deſire of it ſubjects an ambitious Mind, one would be ſtill the more ſurprized to ſee ſo many reſtleſs Candidates for Glory.

Ambition raiſes a ſecret Tumult in the Soul, it inflames the Mind, and puts it into a violent hurry of Thought: It is ſtill reaching after an empty imaginary Good; that has not in it the power to abate or ſatisfy it. Moſt other things we long for can allay the cravings of their proper Senſe, and for a while ſet the Appetite at reſt: But Fame is a Good ſo wholly foreign to our Natures, that we have no Faculty in the Soul adapted to it, nor any Organ in the Body to reliſh it; an Object of Deſire placed out of the poſſibility of Fruition. It may indeed fill the Mind for a while with a giddy kind of Pleaſure, but it is ſuch a Pleaſure as makes a Man reſtleſs and uneaſy under it; and which does not ſo much ſatisfy the preſent Thirſt, as it excites freſh Deſires, and ſets the Soul on new Enterpriſes. For how few ambitious Men are there, who have got as much Fame as they deſired, and whoſe thirſt after it has not been as eager in the very height of their Reputation, as it was before they became known and eminent among Men? There is not any Circumſtance in *Cæſar*'s Character that gives me a greater Idea of him, than a Saying which *Cicero* tells us he frequently made uſe of in private Converſation, *That he was ſatisfied with his ſhare of Life and Fame. Se ſatis vel ad Naturam, vel ad Gloriam vixiſſe.* Many indeed have given over their purſuits after Fame, but that has proceeded either from the Diſappointments they have met in it, or from their Experience of the little Pleaſure which attends it, or from the better Informations or natural Coldneſs of Old-Age; but ſeldom from a full Satisfaction and Acquieſcence in their preſent Enjoyments of it.

Nor is Fame only unſatisfying in itſelf, but the Deſire of it lays us open to many accidental Troubles, which thoſe are free from who have no ſuch a tender regard for it. How often is the Ambitious Man caſt down and diſappointed, if he receives no Praiſe where he expected it? Nay how often is he mortifyed with the very Praiſes he receives, if they do not riſe ſo high as he thinks they ought, which they ſeldom do unleſs increaſed by Flattery, ſince few Men have ſo good an Opinion of us as we have of our ſelves? But if the Ambitious Man can be ſo much grieved even with Praiſe itſelf, how will he be able to bear up under Scandal and Defamation? For the ſame Temper of Mind which makes him deſire Fame, makes him hate Reproach. If he can be tranſported with the extraordinary Praiſes of Men, he will be as much dejected by their Cenſures. How little therefore is the Happineſs of an Ambitious Man, who gives every one a Dominion over it, who thus ſubjects himſelf to the good or ill Speeches of others, and pu
power of every malicious Tongue to throw
a fit of Melancholly, and deſtroy his natur
Repoſe of Mind? Eſpecially when we
the World is more apt to Cenſure than App
himſelf fuller of Imperfections than Virtu

We may further obſerve, that ſuch a
more grieved for the Loſs of Fame, than
been pleaſed with the Enjoyment of it.
Preſence of this imaginary Good cannot
py, the Abſence of it may make us miſer
in the enjoyment of an Object we only
of Pleaſure which it is capable of giving
loſs of it we do not proportion our Gri
value it bears, but to the value ou
Imaginations ſet upon it.

So inconſiderable is the Satisfaction that Fame b
along with it, and ſo great the Diſquietudes to wh
makes us liable. The Deſire of it ſtirs up very
Motions in the Mind, and is rather enflamed th
fied by the Preſence of the thing deſired. The
ment of it brings but very little Pleaſure, tho' th
or want of it be very ſenſible and afflicting;
this little Happineſs is ſo very precarious, that
ly depends on the Will of others. We are no
tortured by the Reproaches which are offered
are diſappointed by the Silence of Men when
expected; and humbled even by their Praiſe

I ſhall conclude this Subject in my next Pap

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